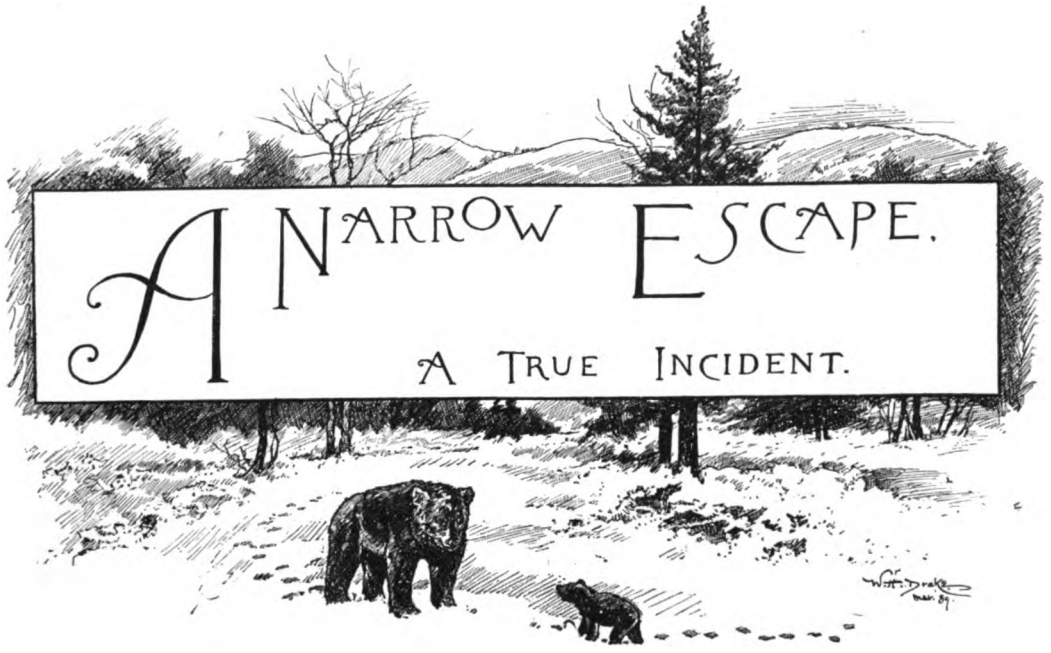

By Myra Goodwin Plantz.

"Boys, be careful with your guns," called Mrs. Brown from the door where she stood watching them out of sight.

"All right, Mother," they replied, laughing at her fears.

"If I can't be trusted with a gun now I 'm fourteen, I 'd better sell out," remarked Tom.

"Well, if I 'm only going on twelve, I 'm as good a shot," answered Harry.

"Oh, you can shoot a chicken after it has gone to roost. I wish the Indians had left us something worth shooting," said Tom, as they climbed the hill behind their home. Here they paused, enjoying the wonderful picture before them, without realizing what gave them the pleasure of the moment. In the distance the deep blue waters of Lake Superior flashed in the sunshine.

The broad, snow-covered belt of ice that skirted the water, was cleared here and there for skating, and a few children were enjoying this sport. Nowhere do children have more fun than in the Lake Superior country, for, in spite of the thermometer's getting so low-spirited, the children almost live out-of-doors, skating, coasting, or rolling down hill into snow-banks, as country children like to do in the hay.

This village was like all mining towns. A church, school-house, and a number of small red houses owned by the company and leased to the miners, clustered around the shaft through which the ore was brought from the mine.

Here and there a more pretentious house marked the home of a "boss" or mining-captain. Back from the lake, rugged hills were broken by winding ravines. These hills were full of valuable minerals and beds of rock, and covered with heavy forests. In the distance the pine-trees, over a hundred feet high, looked like tall sentinels, and the maples and birches, like children just reaching to their knees. The dark green, peeping through the snow-laden branches, was a grateful break in the dazzling whiteness everywhere.

"I 'd like it better, if a deer were over there, and a flock of partridges or a nest of rabbits right here," remarked Harry, as they left the village and pressed into the woods. The boys had on Indian snowshoes,— long frames of hickory wood strung with deer-sinews,— so they were able to walk on top of the snow without sinking through. In many places it would have been over their heads if they had sunk to the earth. Soon the ringing blows of the axe told them a lumber camp was near. The boys passed the long, low little hut where the choppers camped. Farther on they saw the men, dressed in striped red-flannel suits, and with flannel "chucks" on their heads.

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"You 've come to the wrong place for game," shouted one of the lumbermen.

"Bears have all gone to bed," laughed another.

"We 're going to wake them up," replied Harry.

"They 'll eat up such a little fellow as you be," was answered back.

"Come, let 's go the other way. Of course, they would frighten off everything near here. Hal, you are so slight! If you 'd only grow *out* as well as *up*," said Tom, turning away from the men in disgust. "I wish I 'd brought a stronger boy."

"That would n't have made deer and partridges come out," replied Harry, too good-natured to resent Tom's unkind remarks.

"HARRY CREPT UP BESIDE THE BEAR, AND FIRED."

They wandered aimlessly about for some time, leaving land-marks, or rather, *snow*-marks, so they could not lose their way.

"I think a bear has set up winter-quarters in that hollow tree," said Tom, at last.

"Well, go and stir him up," suggested Harry.

"Oh, we 'll go farther on. Bears are more likely to dig a hole in the ground, or to make a house of brush. I should not wonder if there was one under that pile, there." Still Tom did not venture very near the pile of brush.

"Oh, Tom, see here!—I choose this," cried Harry, who was a little in advance.

It was as pretty a baby-bear as one might wish to see. The cub seemed glad to see the boys, and gamboled around like a dog.

"We 'll take him home and make a pet of him," said Tom.

"Mother would rather see a string of fat birds, or a deer," said Harry; "but for us, this is the best find we could have."

It was not so easy to get young Bruin away as they had supposed it would be. They found belts and strings on their clothing and in their pockets, but they had to give the little fellow some liberty or he would have broken away. At last they concluded to carry him; but he struggled so they did not get on very fast.

"Oh, Hal!" Tom suddenly screamed, dropping the cub, "there 's the mother!"

Sure enough, Mamma Bear had missed her baby from her warm winter nest and was coming after

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him in a great rage. Tom raised his gun and fired. The ball entered the bear's shoulder, wounding her slightly. Furious with pain, she sprang upon Tom and began tearing at him with her claws and trying to crush him against her shaggy bosom.

Little Harry stood for an instant paralyzed with fear. He knew that if he should fire, he was as likely to kill his brother as to kill the bear. Yet, Tom's only hope was in what the little brother could do.

Harry crept up beside the bear, and fired. The next instant the bear and Tom were lying in the snow, which was deeply stained with blood.

"Oh, Tommy!" cried Harry, "are you dead?"

"No; but roll the bear off or I 'll smother," came from Tom's white lips. Harry touched the bear cautiously, but she made no resistance; the ball had entered her brain and killed her instantly. Tom tried to give his little brother a good hug to show his joy at being alive, but he found his arms were so wounded in places that he was in great pain, and feared that his shoulder was broken, also.

"Don't cry, after you 've been such a man," he said, for Harry was sobbing aloud over his brother's wounds.

"The cub shall be yours, 'cause you got so hurt in getting him," said Harry, wiping his eyes.

"No, he 's yours, 'cause you kept me from being killed altogether. I won't fling your being slim, at you any more, for you can shoot as well as the strongest kind of man!"

This praise made Harry feel equal to anything, even to dragging away the unwilling cub. The little fellow sniffed around his mother, whining piteously. But Harry was a strong boy in spite of his slender build, and Tom gave what help he could in his enfeebled condition. Little Bruin was as "hungry as a bear," so the lunch in Tom's bag was a great help in bringing him along.

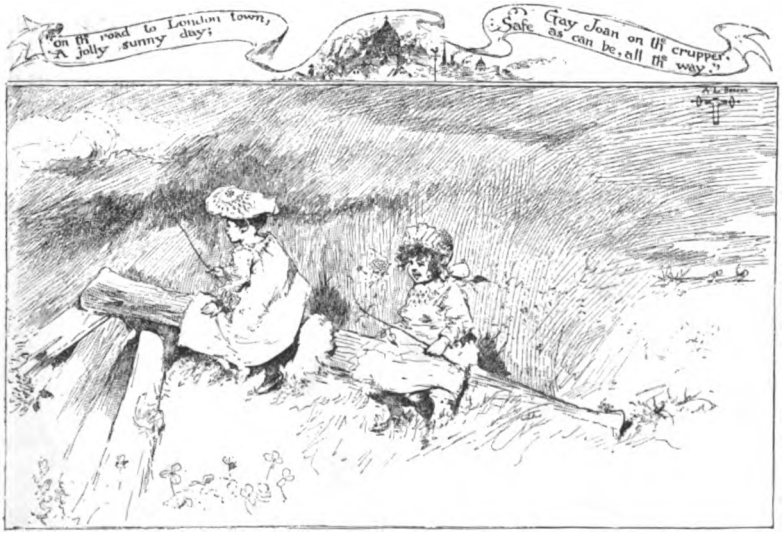
When they reached the camp they found the men at dinner. The "boss" ordered one of them to take the boys home on a wood-sled. But the boys insisted on taking their fallen game with them; so while Tom's wounds were bound up, after a fashion, and both boys were being well fed, some of the men went after the old bear.

Mrs. Brown's liking for hunting was not increased when the sled stopped before her door, with a dead bear, a live bear, and a wounded boy.

Tom bore the doctor's stitches and his confinement so well, however, that she at last gave her consent to have the cub kept for a playmate. The old bear's skin was sent to Marquette to be sold, and the boys treated all their friends to bear's meat.

"Browny" has become a great pet. Even the boys' mother can not but admit that he is full of amusing tricks.

I believe there is a bright future for our bold young hunters. In time they will be brave and good men. But Browny acts more and more like a bear every day, and soon he will be altogether too big to be considered a pet.



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